



OCT 10 2003

United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

SEP 30 2003

The Honorable Ike Skelton  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2206 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515-2504

Dear Congressman Skelton:

Thank you for your letter of September 5, 2003, to President George W. Bush, concerning the immediate need for Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) funds to be made available to farmers and ranchers in Missouri due to prolonged drought and tornados. Because of the topic of your letter, the President asked the Department of Agriculture to send you a response.

As you are aware, the ECP was most recently funded by the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2001, in October 2000. Since then, the program has operated by using previously unallocated funds and through the reallocation of funds as it becomes known that the funds will not be used as originally intended. We currently have approximately \$31 million in pending requests, \$4 million of which are for damage in Missouri. This does not include the most recent damage caused by Hurricane Isabel.

We are currently reviewing our options to fund pending and future requests, including notifying Congress of the intent to use CCC funds to continue the ECP. Unfortunately, no other program provides for unused fiscal year 2003 funds to be reallocated from other States to Missouri. Additionally, the Department fully supports any member of Congress making an effort to present an emergency appropriation bill, which would provide the necessary funding for the ECP.

Again, thank you for your letter. We appreciate the opportunity to respond to your concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.B. Penn", with a stylized flourish at the end.

J.B. Penn  
Under Secretary  
Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services